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Dhillon School of Business partners with MNP and CPAEF for new Insight Series micro-course seminar program

\$200,000 combined gift initiates forward-thinking program

Seeking to further meet the needs of the ever-changing nature of the business world, the University of Lethbridge’s Dhillon School of Business (DSB), with support of MNP and the CPA Education Foundation, is introducing the Insight Series micro-course seminar program.

A six micro-course program, the Insight Series is designed to enhance what DSB faculty member Sonya von Heyking (CPA, CA, CIA, BMgt '03 Great Distinction) calls “human skills”, and an added emphasis in the business world on critical thinking, creativity, adaptability and collaboration.



“This was born out of us looking at the CPA profession in Canada evolving its competency map for the future of accounting,” says von Heyking, who engaged subject matter experts and professionals from a variety of disciplines to build the courses. “If artificial intelligence (AI) and robotic process automation are going to take over the more mechanical and technical parts of the job, what is a future ready, CPA? What does a CPA of 2025, 2030, 2035 need to exemplify?”

The series addresses skills above and beyond the technical requirements to be a professional accountant and taps into the competencies of critical thinking, curiosity, creativity, communication and emotional intelligence in a professional context. MNP and CPAEF contributed a combined \$200,000 to help initiate the program.

“In speaking with the MNP leadership team as we were beginning to put this together, we understood the value they placed on employees who are client centred, good communicators, attentive listeners and clear thinkers,” says von Heyking. “Likewise, the CPA Education Foundation is committed to strengthening the future of the accounting profession through innovative and impactful education. That played a major role in the development of the courses.”

David Muryn, MNP’s regional managing partner, Lethbridge, says the partnership with the University and CPA Education Foundation is an excellent fit, benefitting students today and the profession for years to come.

“As the pace of change continues to accelerate in the accounting profession, so does the need for adaptability and self-directed life-long learning,” says Muryn. “We’re proud to partner with the U of L and CPA Education Foundation to equip CPAs with the skills they need to recognize opportunities, manage risks, and deliver value-added insight in the dynamic and unfamiliar terrain.”

That the Insight Series enhances the student experience while also connecting southern Alberta businesses to the University is an added value to the program.

“It’s also exciting to collaborate with local and regional businesses on this initiative,” adds Muryn. “While students gain exposure to real-world challenges and the opportunity to build relationships early in their career, owners also get to tap into a rich talent pool to solve practical challenges quickly and cost effectively.”

The proposed seminar courses include: **Curiosity and Creativity** (individual and organizational resilience is reinforced through curiosity and creativity in individuals and among teams); **Disruption or Distraction** (knowing which distractions require attention, and how to leverage them for organizational benefit, will be the key to survival for businesses of the future); **Problem Identification and Definition** (problem discovery requires a questioning mindset, the ability to synthesize information, and a well-designed approach); **Attitudes, Ethics and Stewardship** (Stewardship, ethics and a governance mindset are critical to decision-making); **Inquiry Based Insights** (Applying an inquiry based approach to critical thinking can result in better decision-making, transform analysis into insight, and differentiate between success and luck); **Critical Thinking in Industry** (Leveraging expertise in sectors such as agriculture, Indigenous Nations, dealerships, and food and beverage processing, participants explore deductive and inductive reasoning, fallacies of adequacy and relevance, and argument assessment techniques as they study organizational missteps and successes).

“What I’m hoping is that we give students an opportunity to build personal and professional habits that, when faced with a problem, allow students to pause and reflect more, and not see it as simply black and white,” says von Heyking. “We would like to provide them with a toolkit to support their nascent professionalism particularly in

terms of communication, personal efficacy, and problem-solving skills. If they can have that moment, in academics or work, where they sit back and think about mapping out all the possible outcomes of a situation and think through the best way to move forward, then I think we've given them a valuable skill."

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